

2013

The Joy of (Performance) Assessment

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Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Makula, Amanda Y.; Bluemle, Stefanie R.; and Rogal, Margaret W.. "The Joy of (Performance) Assessment" (2013). *Library and Information Science: Faculty Scholarship & Creative Works*.
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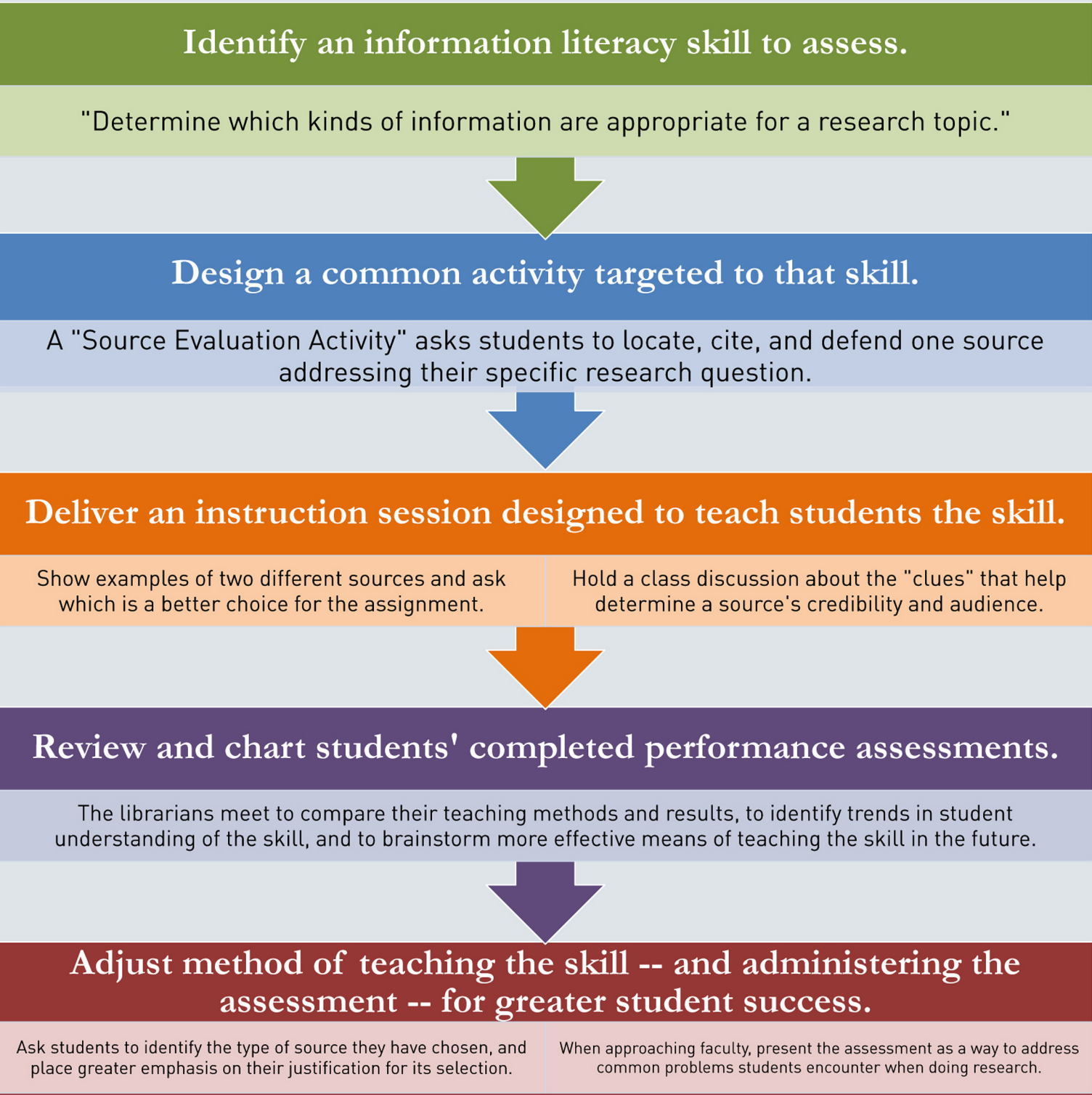


The Joy of (Performance) Assessment

How can librarians **assess** student learning in a way that is **organic** to the assignment and instruction session, yet gives results that are **comparable** across classes?

Performance Assessment:
A qualitative method of assessment in which students demonstrate learning by completing specific tasks related to targeted learning outcomes. Performance Assessment encourages real-life application of skills and is well-suited to an information literacy program in which concepts carry more weight than the mechanics of searching.

How It Works:



Stefanie Bluemle, Amanda Makula, & Margi Rogal: Reference Librarians, Thomas Tredway Library, Augustana College

Since 2011, the Augustana College instruction librarians have been using performance assessment to evaluate their work with a three-term sequence of required first-year general education classes ("Liberal Studies First Year" or LSFY). Replacing a fixed-choice, quantitative information literacy test, performance assessment has allowed the librarians to compare results across different assignments taught by different instructors in the LSFY sequence in order to identify -- and therefore address -- strengths and challenges in students' research abilities.

Here are some examples of performance assessments the librarians have used in each term of LSFY:

LSFY 101: Use reference materials to select a topic and to locate reliable background information

Name _____

Using the Reference Collection

What topic / area do you want to learn more about? [What topic are you exploring right now? What is your topic? etc.]

Using the blue Library of Congress (LC) Classification guide, identify two areas to browse for information about your topic:

1. _____ 2. [optional if short on time] _____

Go to one of those areas and browse the titles. Choose one and write the title and call number (located on the spine of the book):

Title: _____

Call number: _____

Using the Index and/or Table of Contents in the book you select, locate the volume(s) and/or page number(s) that address your topic:

Volume(s): _____ Page number(s): _____

Now, read about your topic. Write a summary of what you learn here:

Using the call number of the book, find another book on your topic in the Stacks area of the collection:

Title: _____

Call number: _____

LSFY 102: Determine which forms of information are appropriate for a research topic

Name _____

Source Evaluation Activity

Based on the criteria we established as a class, find one source that you think would be appropriate for your project. Attach a copy of the first page of the source to this sheet, and answer the questions below.

What is your topic?

Write a citation below for the source you chose. At a minimum, include the author and title of the source and, if applicable, the publication it came from.

Write 3-5 sentences explaining why this source is appropriate for your project. Refer to the criteria we established as a class at the beginning of the class period.

Remember to attach a copy of the first page of the source!

LSFY 103: Refine a research question

Name _____

Exploring Sources/Finding a Topic or Research Question

1. As you begin to think about this project, what topic or question are you thinking of exploring?

2. Where will you begin your research?

Reference collection ALICat/browsing the book stacks

Browse the web Explore databases

3. Select two sources that you have found that will help you explore your subject.

a. _____

b. _____

4. After reviewing the two sources, what does your idea look like now? How have the two sources helped you refine or narrow your topic or question? Write a short paragraph reflecting on these questions.

Highlights of performance assessment:

- fully-integrated into the class session
- useful to students (e.g., gives them a possible source for an assignment)
- provides information about concepts librarians most commonly teach, thus directly fueling improvement in their work



"We are about more than simply preparing a new generation of workers to contribute to the economy; we are about preparing a new generation of critical, creative and ethical thinkers who engage in an active life of the mind."
--Augustana College President Steve Bahls

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